

Washington State Patrol Media Release

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*****For Immediate Release*****

Date: February 12, 2008
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9-1-1 for Emergencies Only

The Washington State Patrol is asking for your help in reducing non-emergency calls to our emergency dispatch centers. This will allow our staff to focus on critical incidents and improve emergency response. Calling 9-1-1 should be reserved for reporting life threatening emergencies.

Many calls to 9-1-1 are inquiries about road conditions.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) provides traffic conditions, construction information, and mountain pass reports on their web site, www.wsdot.wa.gov that can be extremely useful before you leave your home or business. This website has links to closures, detours, traffic congestion maps, near real time camera views, weather, etc.

While traveling, traffic information can also be accessed by calling 5-1-1 from your cellular phone. If your cell phone is based in area codes outside Washington, you can direct dial (800) 695-ROAD (7623.)

You may also be able to listen to current, updated information on the WSDOT highway advisory radio. Watch for signs that indicate the channel for your area. Information on traffic conditions is also made available to the media so you may also hear travel advisories on local radio stations.

Finally, WSDOT highway advisory signs located at numerous key locations throughout the State can give you beneficial traffic information that can be extremely timely while you are traveling.

During this recent bout of winter storms the State Patrol in the Spokane area experienced a 27% increase in 9-1-1 calls and a 45% increase in collisions reported, while the Yakima area had an increase of 12% in 9-1-1 calls and 47% increase in collisions reported when comparing January 2008 to January 2007.

The Washington State Patrol asks that you call 9-1-1 in an emergency; otherwise, use the other means mentioned to get accurate, timely traveler information. Chief John Batiste, Chief of the Washington State Patrol says, "This is a win-win for the public and emergency response agencies."

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